



May 20, 2005

Senator Bill Frist, M.D.
Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Frist and Senator Reid:

For 214 years, the United States Senate has been referred to as the "World's Greatest Deliberative Body." Since before any of us served in this hallowed chamber, it was a bastion of civility, dignity, honor and respect.

And though we may have disagreed on public policy, members always recognized that the Senate must preserve its bipartisan pedigree. That is why it is so disturbing to us that current members of the Senate have not been able to resolve the current debate over judicial nominations. Just as troubling, we regret that the chamber's debate has degenerated into a series of partisan attacks, grounded in willfully disingenuous and misleading justifications for delaying and denying votes on judicial nominations.

The current tactic of withholding a vote on a president's judicial nominations is an unprecedented rejection of Senate tradition. The claim that the Senate filibuster of judicial nominees has been an accepted parliamentary tactic is plainly false; an overt distortion of the Senate's responsibility to give the president advice and consent on his nominees.

The constitutional option is not the ideal way of guaranteeing that the president's judicial nominees receive the votes they deserve. However, barring the minority's willingness to restore 214 years of precedent and tradition, it is a far better option than allowing the minority to hijack the chamber and deny the Senate the opportunity to fulfill its constitutional obligations.

The Senate must be allowed to function in a way that allows it to fulfill its constitutional obligations to the country. Denying votes on these nominees not only forces the Senate to abandon its duties, but tears at the very fabric of our great republic.

Sincerely,

Fmr. Senator James Buckley
Fmr. Senator Slade Gorton
Fmr. Senator Zell Miller
Fmr. Senator Paul Laxalt
Fmr. Senator Fred Thompson